

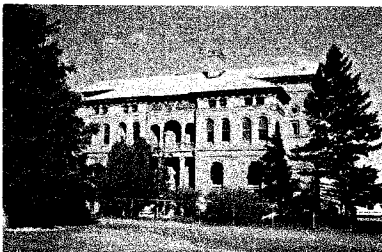
## INFORMATIONAL TESTIMONY ON SB 299

Chere Jiusto ~ Montana Preservation Alliance  
516 N Park, Suite A, Helena, MT 59601

SB 299 would authorize the lease or exchange of historic properties owned by the state, expanding the current mechanism that allows for transfer of ownership to a local governmental entity or public sale to the highest bidder. SB299 would enable any person or organization to lease a historic property from the state if the agency head and the State Historic Preservation Officer determine that leasing or exchanging the property would help to ensure its preservation. Thus at the Pine Hills Chapel, where a local theatre group is interested in long term use (an example brought to committee attention by the Miles City preservation office), they could be authorized to do so. Currently, the local county does not want to assume ownership and they do not have the funds to compete for the property at public auction.

In addition, SB 299 would make official the creation of heritage preservation and cultural tourism commissions at the desire of the community, and encourage participation in Montana's existing certified local government program that operates in affiliation with the MT State Historic Preservation Office, a very strong program with a support network and limited grant funds to support local efforts.

It would also authorize the MT Department of Transportation to post signs for heritage and tourism districts. These signs are much valued by local communities as an added draw to visitors; this simply expands the definition to enable heritage and tourism endeavors to have this community roadside signage. In turn, these measures would help communities identify, protect and promote heritage and cultural tourism resources, much like the current efforts with the Hands of Harvest craft heritage trail and the Dinosaur Trail in Eastern Montana, both of which have been highly successful. Passage of this bill would encourage localities and agencies to exhibit and advertise heritage and cultural tourism resources; encourage business investment and retention, and promote new businesses, all as related to preservation and heritage and cultural tourism.



*Boulder Admin Building*



*State Soldiers Home*



*Pine Hills Chapel*

Research for this bill was the result of an interim study that focused upon several areas of inquiry: Economics of Historic Preservation, Best Practices for State Stewardship, Heritage Development and Civic Tourism. A modest database was created that revealed that our state owns approximately 700 historic properties, including 250 at Virginia and Nevada cities and 60 at Bannack. Through the process, a number of parties participated – state agencies that maintain and use heritage properties, local preservation officials, members of legislative committees, and representatives of various state and local business groups. The result was a series of recommendations grounded in solid data drawn from across the nation. Highly detailed minutes from those meetings and presentations are posted on the Council website at: [www.his.state.mt.us/shpo/HCadvisoryCouncil.asp](http://www.his.state.mt.us/shpo/HCadvisoryCouncil.asp)

In reviewing best practices from across the country, and listening to agency and public input, a state policy for exchanging or leasing historic properties was identified as a tool to help ensure long-term preservation, particularly of buildings that are not in use by agencies. This approach has worked in other states and at the federal level; the properties above are among those considered in making this recommendation.

## INFORMATIONAL TESTIMONY ON SB 299

Chere Jiusto ~ Montana Preservation Alliance  
516 N Park, Suite A, Helena, MT 59601

**SB 299** would authorize the lease or exchange of historic properties owned by the state, expanding the current mechanism that allows for transfer of ownership to a local governmental entity or public sale to the highest bidder. SB299 would enable any person or organization to lease a historic property from the state if the agency head and the State Historic Preservation Officer determine that leasing or exchanging the property would help to ensure its preservation. Thus at the Pine Hills Chapel, where a local theatre group is interested in long term use (an example brought to committee attention by the Miles City preservation office), they could be authorized to do so. Currently, the local county does not want to assume ownership and they do not have the funds to compete for the property at public auction.

In addition, SB 299 would make official the creation of heritage preservation and cultural tourism commissions at the desire of the community, and encourage participation in Montana's existing certified local government program that operates in affiliation with the MT State Historic Preservation Office, a very strong program with a support network and limited grant funds to support local efforts.

It would also authorize the MT Department of Transportation to post signs for heritage and tourism districts. These signs are much valued by local communities as an added draw to visitors; this simply expands the definition to enable heritage and tourism endeavors to have this community roadside signage. In turn, these measures would help communities identify, protect and promote heritage and cultural tourism resources, much like the current efforts with the Hands of Harvest craft heritage trail and the Dinosaur Trail in Eastern Montana, both of which have been highly successful. Passage of this bill would encourage localities and agencies to exhibit and advertise heritage and cultural tourism resources; encourage business investment and retention, and promote new businesses, all as related to preservation and heritage and cultural tourism.



*Boulder Admin Building*



*State Soldiers Home*



*Pine Hills Chapel*

Research for this bill was the result of an interim study that focused upon several areas of inquiry: Economics of Historic Preservation, Best Practices for State Stewardship, Heritage Development and Civic Tourism. A modest database was created that revealed that our state owns approximately 700 historic properties, including 250 at Virginia and Nevada cities and 60 at Bannack. Through the process, a number of parties participated – state agencies that maintain and use heritage properties, local preservation officials, members of legislative committees, and representatives of various state and local business groups. The result was a series of recommendations grounded in solid data drawn from across the nation. Highly detailed minutes from those meetings and presentations are posted on the Council website at: [www.his.state.mt.us/shpo/HCadvisoryCouncil.asp](http://www.his.state.mt.us/shpo/HCadvisoryCouncil.asp)

In reviewing best practices from across the country, and listening to agency and public input, a state policy for exchanging or leasing historic properties was identified as a tool to help ensure long-term preservation, particularly of buildings that are not in use by agencies. This approach has worked in other states and at the federal level; the properties above are among those considered in making this recommendation.